



Plastics recyclers hit capacity utilisation problems

The BIR Plastics Committee meeting in Oslo produced a batch of market snapshots from Europe and the Far East.

Key discussion points included the impact of SARS, a weak U.S. dollar and capacity under-utilisation in Europe.

Plastics Committee Chairman Peter Daalder of Daly Plastics, The Netherlands.

The important Italian plastics recycling industry was ripe for restructuring given that many of its 200 plants were well below optimum size, Enrico Bobbio of Rome-based Polieco told the BIR Plastics Committee meeting in Oslo.

Only five of the country's recycling facilities were capable of processing more than 25 000 tonnes of plastics in a year, while a far larger number operated in a capacity range of 6000 to 8000 tonnes per annum. 'The plants are too small and too scattered,' he told delegates, adding that capacity utilisation throughout the industry was currently only 80%.

Given the demand in his own country for increasing volumes of feedstock, Mr Bobbio went on to note the large volumes of plastics arising in recovered paper and textiles collections. He therefore proposed closer contacts with paper and textiles recyclers to improve the availability of secondary plastics.

SARS panic

In his report on the Asian plastics market, Jean-Michel Cauche of Sobeca Int. in Belgium explained that the 'panic' created in China by the SARS epidemic had led workers to desert factories from the north of

Shanghai province all the way to the north of Beijing. Meanwhile, the drop in the value of the U.S. dollar was reducing margins and disrupting export markets in Asia.

This disruption of the important Far East export markets had contributed towards 'a really bad year' to date for Spanish plastics recyclers, according to Marc Figueras. Many factories were struggling to sell their final products and utilisation rates were generally below 80%. Some smaller operators had been forced to stop production, he added.

Plastics Committee Chairman Peter Daalder of The Netherlands pointed to fierce competition for plastics within the German recycling industry, as well as to a reduction in the country's DSD collection volumes.

Guest speaker at the Plastics Committee meeting was Eric Breny, Vinyloop Marketing & Business Manager within Solvay, Belgium. In his presentation 'Vinyloop: complementing PVC recycling', he noted that the Vinyloop factory opened in Ferrara, Italy, in early 2002 would become the 'mother plant for other units' over the next few years. Related ventures would focus on PVC recovery from, for example, cable and even wallpaper. □

Collection fee systems for scrap tyres

An income surplus had enabled the operators of Norway's tyre collection system to reduce their fees from the start of this year, the BIR Tyres Committee meeting in Oslo was informed.

Hroar Braathen, Director of non-profit making Norwegian tyre recycling company Norsk Dekkretur A/S, explained that his government had introduced legislation in 1995 forcing importers and domestic manufacturers to collect and recycle scrap tyres in line with their individual sales. Fees paid to Norsk Dekkretur in respect of new and retreaded tyres had been set initially at Euro 2 for passenger car tyres and at Euro 10 for truck, bus and tractor tyres. However, new respective rates of Euro 1.25 and Euro 8 had been introduced at the start of 2003.

The Norwegian tyre market stood at around 34 000 tonnes per annum, while collection rates had reached 115% and 109% in 2001 and 2002 respectively, the guest speaker pointed out. Some of these tyres were sorted for retreading or for export to Eastern Europe and Africa, while the larger proportion was used either for energy recovery in the cement, electricity and heating industries or for material recycling, including civil engineering applications, horse tracks and sports pitches.

Also at the meeting, BIR Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate of The Netherlands noted that, in his own country, a law enshrining producer/importer responsibility for the entire life-cycle of tyres was scheduled to come into effect in the fourth quarter of this year. This would entail free-of-charge take-back of scrap tyres under a scheme financed by manufacturers/importers according to their individual share

of the nation's 4.8 million unit tyre market. The initial fee imposed on the selling price of new tyres would be Euro 2, of which 75 cents would go to the material recycler, it was explained.



Guest speaker was Hroar Braathen, Director of non-profit making Norwegian tyre recycling company Norsk Dekkretur (left). To his right, Tyres Committee Chairman Barend Ten Bruggencate.

By Ian Martin